

USAID - Federal Regulations for Web Accessibility (http://www.usaid.gov/info_technology/xweb/toolkit/federal_regs.html)

The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) issued final standards for electronic and information technology covered by section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. As such, USAID is revising its standards for web accessibility based on these federally mandated standards.

The Federal Regulations on Web Accessibility differ slightly from the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) released by the WAI. Parts (a) through (i) incorporate the exact language of the WCAG 1.0, which were posted on USAID's web site at the onset of this initiative. Paragraphs (j) and (k) are meant to be consistent with WCAG 1.0 guidelines, but have been rephrased to provide a more enforceable regulatory language. Finally, paragraphs (l) through (p) are different than the WCAG 1.0 and generally require a higher level of accessibility than what was provided for originally. Federal Regulations do not address WCAG 1.0 checklists for priorities 2 and 3. For more information about making your pages accessible above and beyond the Federal Requirements at this time, please go to <http://www.w3c.org/wai/>.

Where applicable, the WCAG 1.0 checkpoint has been referenced at the end of the text from the Federal Regulations. In addition, USAID has provided further requirements, expanding on the federal regulations where needed and based on previously established policy for production of USAID web pages.

Part 1194: Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards

Section 1194.22 Web-based intranet and internet information and applications.

- a. A text equivalent for every non-text element shall be provided (e.g., via "alt", "longdesc", or in element content). (WCAG 1.0 checkpoint 1.1)
- b. Equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation shall be synchronized with the presentation. (WCAG 1.0 checkpoint 1.4)
- c. Web pages shall be designed so that all information conveyed with color is also available without color, for example from context or markup. (WCAG 1.0 checkpoint 2.1)
- d. Documents shall be organized so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet. (WCAG 1.0 checkpoint 6.1)

- e. Redundant text links shall be provided for each active regions of a server-side map. (WCAG 1.0 checkpoint 1.2)
- f. Client-side image maps shall be provided instead of server-side image maps except where the regions cannot be defined with an available geometric shape. (WCAG 1.0 checkpoint 9.1)
- g. Row and column headers shall be identified for data tables. (WCAG 1.0 checkpoint 5.1)
- h. Markup shall be used to associate data cells and header cells for data tables that have two or more logical levels of row or column headers. (WCAG 1.0 checkpoint 5.2)
- i. Frames shall be titled with text that facilitates frame identification and navigation. (WCAG 1.0 checkpoint 12.1)

NOTE: USAID has an existing policy against the use of frames which subsumes this requirement.

- j. Pages shall be designed to avoid causing the screen to flicker with a frequency greater than 2 Hz and lower than 55 Hz. (elaborates on WCAG 1.0 checkpoint 7.1)
- k. A text-only page, with equivalent information or functionality, shall be provided to make a web site comply with the provisions of this part, when compliance cannot be accomplished in any other way. The content of the text-only page shall be updated whenever the primary page changes. (elaborates on WCAG 11.0 checkpoint 12.1)
- l. When pages utilize scripting languages to display content, or to create interface elements, the information provided by the script shall be identified with functional text that can be read by assistive technology.
- m. When a web page requires that an applet, plug-in or other application be present on the client system to interpret page content, the page must provide a link to a plug-in or applet that complies with §1194.21(a) through (l).

NOTE: USAID has an existing policy against the use of applets which partially subsume this requirement. Content providers for the USAID site should provide links to Adobe Reader at <http://www.adobe.com/readstep.html> on all pages that have links to PDF files. According to the comments about this section of the regulations, "This provision places a responsibility on the web page author to know that a compliant application exists, before requiring a plug-in." In addition, content providers should provide descriptive text and file size of any downloadable documents that indicates the format of the document and

approximate download time. This will allow the user to ensure that it is a format type they will be able to open once downloaded and that the download will not tie-up their machine for an unexceptable period of time.

- n. When electronic forms are designed to be completed on-line, the form shall allow people using assistive technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues

NOTE: In conjunction with this requirement, USAID will start to require that when a web page contains dropdown boxes, radio buttons, checkboxes or similar functionality coded in HTML, the author of the page provide the following text alerting the user of those features. It has been found that various screen readers and browsers interpret these features differently. In order to alert the user that these features are on the page, the following text should be provided:

"This page contains [dropdown boxes, radio buttons, checkboxes] which may be ignored by some forms of web browsing technology. In these cases, this information can be accessed by using the keyboard instead of the mouse (i.e.: Tab key, Enter key, Arrow keys, Spacebar, etc.)."

USAID Developers should not use select options that will automatically send a user to a page upon selection. Provide the user with a "submit" button that will allow them to confirm a selection once made.

- o. A method shall be provided that permits users to skip repetitive navigation links.

NOTE: The USAID site currently provides a method to skip the top navigation bar using white text above the links. Content providers should consider using a second option to skip redundant or repetitive left-hand navigation that will allow users to skip over the links in the left-hand navigation to the content of the page on the right.

- p. When a timed response is required, the user shall be alerted and given sufficient time to indicate more time is required.

Additionally the Federal Requirements contain a section on video and multimedia products (§ 1194.14) which contains the following sections:

- c. All training and multimedia productions which support the agency's mission, regardless of format, that contain speech or other audio information necessary for the comprehension of the content shall be open or closed captioned.
- d. All training and informational video and multimedia productions which support the agency's mission, regardless of format, that contain visual information necessary for the comprehension of the content, shall be audio described.

- e. Display or presentation of alternate text presentation or audio descriptions shall be user-selectable unless permanent.

This will affect any multimedia that is posted to the USAID web site from this point forward. The intent of the regulation is to provide simultaneous access to whatever alternate mode the user requires. For example, when a deaf user is watching a video, that user should have access to simultaneous captions rather than a script that exists on another page.